

Message Text

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SUBJ: VISIT TO UAE OF JAPANESE FOREIGN MINISTER

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1. SUMMARY. JANUARY 15 - 17 VISIT TO UNITED ARAB EMIRATES
BY JAPANESE FONMIN SONODA PRODUCED AS EXPECTED NO SURPRISES.
TWO SIDES DISCUSSED MIDEAST SITUATION, OIL AND LNG SUPPLIES
FOR WHICH JAPAN IS UAE'S PRINCIPAL CUSTOMER, AND BILATERAL
RELATIONS INCLUDING JAPANESE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS
AND PARTICIPATION IN VARIOUS UAE INDUSTRIAL PROJECTS. OUR
INITIAL ASSESSMENT IS THAT VISIT PROBABLY ACHIEVED ITS
OBJECTIVES OF BETTER ACQUAINTING SONODA WITH AN IMPORTANT
MIDEASTERN TRADING PARTNER AND OF CONVEYING TO HIS UAE
HOSTS JAPAN'S INTEREST IN CONTINUING CLOSE COOPERATION WITH
THEM AND OTHER GULF STATES IN A VARIETY OF FIELDS.
END SUMMARY.

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2. SUNAO SONODA VISITED UAE JANUARY 1917, FIRST VISIT
OVER TO EMIRATES BY A JAPANESE FOREIGN MINISTER. TIMING
OF VISIT WAS SLIGHTLY AWKWARD IN THAT BOTH UAE PRESIDENT
SHAIKH ZAYID AND VP SHAIKH RASHID WERE ABROAD. IN THEIR
ABSENCE SONODA WAS RECEIVED BY SHARJAH RULER AND UAE
SUPREME COUNCIL MEMBER SHAIKH SULTAN AND BY CROWN
PRINCE SHAIKH KHALIFAH BIN ZAYID OF ABU DHABI AND

MINDEF SHAIKH MUHAMMAD BIN RASHID OF DUBAI ON BEHALF OF THEIR FATHERS. SONODA ALSO HELD TALKS WITH HIS UAE COUNTERPART AHMAD KHALIFAH AL-SUWAIDI THAT COVERED BILATERAL COOPERATION, THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST, AND ENERGY MATTERS. IN ADDITION, HE PAID CALLS ON DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER SHAIKH HAMDAN BIN MUHAMMAD AND ON SHAIKH TAHNOUN BIN MUHAMMAD, THE LATTER BEING CHAIRMAN OF THE ABU DHABI NATIONAL OIL COMPANY AS WELL AS GOVERNOR OF AL AIN REGION WHERE JAPANESE ARE INVOLVED IN A DESERT AGRICULTURE PROJECT. SONODA ALSO MET WITH OFFICIALS OF UAE AND DUBAI CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY.

3. BILATERAL RELATIONS. IN HIS ARRIVAL STATEMENT AND AT HIS JANUARY 16 PRESS CONFERENCE, SONODA STRESSED THAT HIS VISIT WAS RELATED NOT ONLY TO EXTENSIVE COMMERCIAL RELATIONS BETWEEN TWO COUNTRIES (JAPAN IS UAE'S PRINCIPAL OIL AND LNG CUSTOMER AND LEADING SOURCE OF UAE IMPORTS) BUT IS CONCERNED WITH BROADENING TECHNICAL, CULTURAL, AND SOCIAL CONTACTS AS WELL. SONODA NOTED THAT THERE ARE NOW APPROXIMATELY ONE THOUSAND JAPANESES LIVING AND WORKING IN UAE WHO ARE MAKING AN ACTIVE AND POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION TO EMIRATES' EFFORTS TO DEVELOP ECONOMICALLY AND INDUSTRIALLY. HE INDICATED THAT ONE PURPOSE OF THIS VISIT WAS TO DEEPEN AND EXPAND THESE AREAS OF COOPERATION WHICH INCLUDE PARTICIPATION IN CRUDE OIL PRODUCTION,

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PETROCHEMICALS, DESALINATION AND ELECTRIC POWER GENERATION FACILITIES, CEMENT PLANTS, AND SHIP REPAIR YARDS.

4. MIDDLE EAST. JOINT COMMUNIQUE ISSUED AFTERNOON OF JANUARY 17 STATED THAT SUWAIDI HAD EXPLAINED UAE POSITION ON MIDEAST QUESTION AND THAT SONODA HAD EXPRESSED HOP FOR AN EARLY PEASE IN MIDEAST "THAT RESPECTS THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE'S RIGHTS INCLUDING THE RIGHT TO SELF-DETERMINATION," ACCORDING UAE GOVERNMENT-OWNED ENGLISH-LANGUAGE EMIRATES NEWS. AT HIS PRESS CONFERENCE SONODA QUOTED AS SAYING JAPAN SUPPORTS JUST AND LASTING PEACE IN THE MIDEAST AND RESOLUTIONS OF THE UN. "WE ALSO SUPPORT THE PEACE EFFORTS WHICH ARE BEING EXERTED CURRENTLY," HE ADDED.

5. OIL. SONODA FRANKLY NOTED JAPAN'S LONG-TERM DEPENDENCE UPON OPEC AND ESPECIALLY MIDDLE EASTERN OIL TO MEET ITS ENERGY NEEDS. FOR THIS REASON, HE EXPLAINED TO PRESS, JAPAN WILL WORK WITH OIL PRODUCERS TO HELP CONSERVE VALUE OF THEIR IMPORTANT ENERGY RESOURCE AND TO DEVELOP ALTERNATE SOURCES OF ENERGY. IN THE JOING COMMUNIQUE HE EXPRESSED JAPAN'S APPRECIATION FOR MODERATE POLICY FOLLOWED BY UAE ON OIL PROCES

AND FOR ITS "FRIENDLY ATTITUDE" IN ASSURING STABILITY OF
SUPPLY OF OIL TO JAPAN.

6. UAE REPORTEDLY AGREED TO SUPPORT, WITHIN FRAMEWORK OF
ARAB BLOC, JAPAN'S CANDIDATURE FOR UNSC SEAT IN 1978.

7. SONODA RENEWED STANDING INVITATIONS TO SHAIKH ZAYID AND TO
FONMIN SUWAIDI TO VISIT JAPAN. HE ALSO EXTENDED INVITATIONS TO
SHAIKH SULTAN OF SHARJAH, SHAIKH RASHID OF DUBAI, AND TO RASHID'S
SON MINDEF SHAIKH MUHAMMAD.

8. COMMENT. VISIT AS EXPECTED WAS PRIMARILY GOODWILL ONE THAT
PRODUCED H SURPRISES. AS UAEG IS ITSELF FOLLOWING A POLICY OF
CAUTION AND OFFICIAL NON-COMMENT ON CURRENT EGYPTIAN-ISRAELI
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PEACE TALKS, SONODA WAS NOT UNDER PRESSURE TO TAKE POTENTIALLY
CONTROVERSIAL PUBLIC POSITION ON THAT ISSUE. REFERENCE TO
MIDEAST IN JOING COMMUNIQUE STRIKES US AS ABOUT THE MINIMUM THAT
EITHER SIDE COULD GET AWAY WITH IN TAKING NOTICE OF PREMIER
POLITICAL TOPIC IN THIS REGION. ON THE OIL SIDE, JAPANESE DISCUSSED
IN GENERAL TERMS THEIR FUTURE REQUIREMENTS FOR PETROLEUM AS
WELL AS LNG FOR WHICH JAPAN IS SO FAR SOLE UAE MARKET. BOTH
SIDES DISCUSSED CURRENT JAPANESE PARTICIPATION IN OFFSHORE OIL
OPERATIONS AND POSSIBLE PARTICIPATION IN VARIOUS PETROCHEMICAL
SCHEMES UNDER CONSIDERATION HERE. WE DO NOT, HOWEVER, KNOW
WHETHER ANY NEW AGREEMENTS IN THIS AREA WERE REACHED. JAPANESE
ARE BELIEVED TO HAVE OFFERED SOME INCREASE IN THEIR MODERATE-
SIZED BILATERAL TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM, MOSTLY SHORT-TERM
TRAINING COURSES IN JAPAN DESIGNED TO HELP TRANSFER TECHNOLOGY
OR MANAGERIAL SKILLS SUPPORTIVE OF JAPANESE EXPORTS TO UAE PLUS
SOME TV AND AGRICULTUREAL EXPERTS IN THE UAE. IN GENERAL, OUR
INITIAL AZUESSMENT IS THAT VISIT PROBABLY ACHIEVED ITS OBJECTIVES
OF BETTER ACQUAINTING SONODA WITH AN IMPORTANT MIDEASTERN
TRADING PARTNER AND OXSCONVEYING TO HIS UAE HOSTS JAPAN'S
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